Issue 11 | July 2025 | By donation

PARTISAN!

Why can't we be friends?

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Submissions

Partisan accepts and encourages unsolicited submissions from left-wing radicals and militants of all backgrounds. Articles range from 800-1,000 words, essays run at a max 2,000. Word count is looser for letters, reports, etc, but we would encourage you to keep them concise.

Please proof-read etc prior to submitting. Our staff will also sub-edit as necessary. We publish monthly, so aim to submit before the 25th of the month at the absolute latest (15th-20th is ideal). Simultaneous submissions accepted on a case-by-case basis.

We are primarily interested in topics such as Marxist political economy, political strategy/tactics, engagement with Communists pasts and futures, critiques of Liberalism/Capitalism/etc, interviews, and features. Please include your name, a summary of the article, and any other relevant information (such as photos/images plus sourcing) in an email (see publishing contact).

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About Partisan:

Partisan is the official publication of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). We are a monthly journal of the 'partyist left' in Australia – that section of the left which views the formation of a mass workers party as its primary task.

Alongside the RCO, we fight for a reunification of the left into a party that can carry out the tasks of the communist and workers movement: the establishment of a democratic republic and the dissolution of the capitalist prison-states.

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EDITORIAL

This month's edition of Partisan! centres around the concept of *broad left unity*.

Broad left unity describes an approach to political unity which rejects the centrality of a coherent political program for such unity, accepted and democratically constructed by all involved. The expansion of Victorian Socialists – now The Socialists - has placed the question and concept of broad left unity back in the political spotlight, with the establishment of the Communist Caucus within The Socialists expressly opposing such a strategy for organisation building. Partyists believe that a broad left unity approach is detrimental to the critical project of building a mass communist party. The lack of a central, revolutionary and democratic minimum-maximum program which allows for the emergence and development of multi-tendency factions within the party, and binds them to the principles of democratic centralism, leaves projects like The Socialists susceptible to opportunism, political incoherence, and potential splits.

It is exciting to witness the nascent potential of political projects like The Socialists to become a mass, revolutionary party. But for this potential to be realised, we as communists must seek to propogate and win a clear strategy – a partyist strategy – within such political projects. We must openly state our views and aims and seize the opportunity to build something more than what currently exists by agitating for a communist orientation and organisation. We must conduct this work as a staunch minority until, through a strategy of revolutionary patience, we become the democratic majority. We aim for political hegemony, and for the establishment of a dual society in which scientific socialism and internationalism are the centre of political life.

Time and time again, the various sects of the contemporary left have made attempts to 'go straight to the masses' and to 'meet the workers where they're at', by going *around* the existing (fractured and disparate) communist and socialist movement. As partyists, we seek to bring an end to the sect cycle through conscious unification under the single banner of the communist party – a party merged with the workers movement. A broad left unity approach will not provide the principled and democratic foundation necessary for such a party.

The question of Edition 11 is what sort of party do we need, and what sort of party do we want? We oppose a broad left unity approach and its contemporary consequences to an alternative, partyist strategy for the contemporary communist and socialist movement.

In May 2025, the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) held an emergency plenary session to discuss our orientation and strategy for involvement in The Socialists. This engagement is primarily through the Communist Caucus of The Socialists, whose composition, strategy and political orientation are outlined by Anthony Furia In *What is the communist caucus?* Ryan M discusses the relationship between Daniel Lopez and Lukács, and Alice reports on the Communist Caucus' engagement within their 2025 Members' Conference which followed this expansion in *Inside the 2025 Victorian Socialists conference*. Edith Fischer pens a sharp critique of the Broad Party approach to left organising, and Maya Kauffman critiques Socialist Alternative's recent 'anti-raunch culture' articles in *Broad or Mass?* and *Woman's Worst Friend*, respectively. Also in this edition is a reprint of an article by Sylvia Ruhl on Black deaths in custody ■

No war with Iran!

From the Central Commitee of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation

On the 13th of June, 2025, Israel launched a series of missile attacks on locations across Iran, including residential areas and nuclear and military facilities. Seventy-eight people were killed and more than 320 wounded, the majority of whom were civilians. The following day, Iran retaliated with remote missile strikes on military structures in Israel, including an attack on Tel Aviv. As of the time of writing, the conflict has only continued to escalate, and the death toll continues to mount.

What will happen now?

As the attacks on Iran continue, the position of the United States has been inconsistent and ever-changing. Initially, Israeli media claimed that the attacks had backing from the U.S., the latter of which denied involvement, in line with years of their own opposition to a direct attack on Iran by Israel. Trump has since, however, made vague promises for how the U.S. plans to end the conflict - claiming he is looking for a solution "better than a ceasefire". This should be taken as a threat to engage the U.S. in direct conflict with Iran. The form such an engagement would take is currently unclear, be it limited to missile strikes, or a full-scale invasion. Regardless of the exact form an intervention may take, it is the responsibility of communists to oppose all imperialist onslaughts on the global working-class.

The Communist Position

The various regional powers of the Middle East attempt to retain and expand their own influence in the region through proxies, and occasionally, open conflict. The Israeli state was founded on the genocide of the Palestinian people which continues to this day. Israel continues to bombard and inflict carnage on the Gaza Strip, and continues to support accelerating settlement expansion in the West Bank. It is openly a Jewish ethnostate, and one that is Jewish-supremacist.

Iran, since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, has been ruled by a reactionary clerical caste that has entrenched a brutal anti-communist, anti-woman, and anti-worker apparatus. The Islamic regime has also failed to retaliate against attacks by Israel and the US in the past; largely due to its own incapacity to emerge victorious from any tit-for-tat escalation this would inevitably cause. The Islamic regime is structurally limited from building capacity to oppose such an onslaught, as it is isolated from any potential for mass support abroad due to its nationalist character. Whilst the working-class of the Middle East may wish to expel the imperialists, the mullahs stand in the way of constructing the necessary internationalist front. The Axis of Resistance does not constitute such a front, on the contrary, it is simply a tool of Iranian Realpolitik.

Iran's support for the Axis of Resistance should not be seen as a principled act of anti-imperialism, but rather simply as a means to prevent Israel from directly attacking Iran, instead busying them in conflicts with Hamas and Hezbollah. Had Iran taken a principled anti-imperialist position, they would have long-ago retaliated against Israel for its attacks on their coalition partners, and not waited until bombardments were unleashed on Tehran. This cynicism on the part of Iran should not be brushed aside: they had collaborated with the occupation of Iraq in 2003, and even offered to cease support for Hamas and Hezbollah in exchange for the normalisation of relations with the U.S.

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation echoes the call of the Communist Party of Iran to oppose supporting the Islamic regime, and to instead fight to intensify the workers' struggle in the country: turning the imperialist war into a regional revolutionary rupture that will sweep aside Israel. Whilst this specific struggle is not one comrades will likely be able to directly assist with in Australia, it is regardless of importance that we highlight it as the correct position. This is necessary to orient the socialist movement in Australia into adopting a disciplined, well-formed outlook that will enable the work of building an anti-

imperialist movement that is truly internationalist in its scope.

Our fight in Australia

The means for socialists and radical workers in Australia to directly fight the assault on Iran are of course incredibly limited. We do, however, maintain the responsibility of rebuilding a thriving anti-imperialist movement at home. The tasks of socialists in Australia are as follows:

1. First and foremost, we must oppose any support by the Australian state for Israel in this conflict, as they continue to provide for the Holocaust in Gaza. We must oppose any deployment of Australian troops overseas, or any facilitation of such deployment. We must demand the closure of all U.S. military and spy bases in Australia, the Middle East, and around the world.

2. Comrades must collectively work towards creating and advocating for up-to-date, materialist critiques of not just American and Israeli imperialism in the Middle East, but Australia's relation to it. We must also link this towards a more complete view of how this relates to imperialism on a broader regional and global scale. A good step towards this is the establishment of more public study and discussion groups. A great base for such efforts would be within the soon-to-be-established Socialist Party.

3. Propagandise on the specific material nature of Australian support for not just the Israeli military, but for its own and for others worldwide. The Australian state is attempting to establish its own defence industry, which already enables and creates some of the latest war machines of our age. A well-known example of this is the production of the F-35 fighter jet's uplock actuator system, which enables the opening and closing of the jet's doors and is necessary for its flight. Manufacturing for this part is only done by one provider in Australia. Agitation around these sectors and their production is necessary for establishing both an accurate understanding of their place in world imperialism and strategies to fight it.

4. Comrades must fight for an internationalist outlook, and push the understanding in both the socialist and workers' movements that the proletariat is one worldwide class, undivided by borders. We must fight the tendency among socialists to uncritically barrack behind bourgeois anti-imperialists from the Global South, such as the Axis of Resistance. These chauvinistic tendencies need to be cast aside if we are serious about building a revolutionary movement, one, that to be successful, must embrace all men as brothers.

We demand the reconstruction of a mass, anti-imperialist struggle that can bring an end to militarism. A movement that is independent of the bourgeois anti-imperialists, and that is united in a final, international class struggle in the form of the one war the working-class must fight: the global class war ■

Who are the RCO?

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) is a pre-party formation that works towards the re-unification of the socialist left in Australia into a single, mass communist party. We come from diverse political backgrounds and schools of Marxist thought, yet we are united by a common program.

We welcome rigorous debate and disagreement and are open to factions, yet act as one organisation. We are guided by the principle of diversity of thought, and unity of action. The capitalist mode of production is at the root of every social, environmental, and economic crisis today.

We fight for the liberation of queer people, Aboriginal people, and women, a liberation which can only be achieved through the destruction of the capitalist system. We are united by our determination to fight the capitalist mode of production at every turn, and our total commitment to its abolition. We are communists, unapologetically and without reservation.

We engage in every form of proletarian activity, whether protests or union drives, yet do not trail social movements; we aim in every instance to build the base for a mass workers' party, necessary to intervene in the class struggle and advance the communist movement.

Lopez on Lukács

Ryan M interviews Melbourne socialist Daniel Lopez on Lukács and more. Ryan is a member of the Platypus Affiliated Society, in Melbourne.

"It is evident that the whole structure of capitalist production rests on the interaction between a necessity subject to strict laws in all isolated phenomena and the relative irrationality of the total process."
- Lukács, *HCC*

In 2002, at the age of 15, Daniel Andrés Lopez looked up "socialism" in the phone book. He found — and joined — the Australian Socialist Alternative (SAlt), a post-Cliffite[1] Trotskyist cadre organisation whose founders were expelled from the ISO over the question of the possibility for mass socialist organizing, activity and recruitment in the early 90's. In the wake of the collapse of the USSR, the ISO hoped that the final defeat of Stalinism - 50 years later than expected - would lead to a global flourishing of Trotskyism. However, SAlt's founders were far more pessimistic and assessed that the 90's were a period of de-politicization and that their tactics and organisation should reflect this. Today, SAlt survives as Australia's largest ostensibly Marxist organisation by far, with over 500 members nationally, mostly centered in Melbourne. However, in the early 2010's, after three years employed as an organizer with the organisation, Lopez developed a growing frustration with what he saw as the 'internal limits' in Socialist Alternative, and the theoretical dogmatism and rigidity of historical thinking amongst his comrades. This played out in several disputes over practical matters of organisation, while, uncontroversially at the time, he had slowly been developing independent positions on questions of philosophy and history. As he says, he 'retreated from being an organizer and started to look around for theory', with the intent 'to just become an intellectual within the group'. In regards to theory, the Socialist Alternative, following in the ISO/SWP(UK) tradition[2], encourages engagement with the work of Hungarian Marxist-Intellectual György Lukács, particularly with his 1923 book *History and Class Consciousness*. Lopez explains:

> *For SAlt, HCC is the recommended reading to answer the question as to why class consciousness is so retrograde - how do we explain ideology? How do we explain the deficiency in class consciousness? Indeed, this is a flavor of SAlt's (and the ISO's) more heterodox Trotskyism. [PC]*

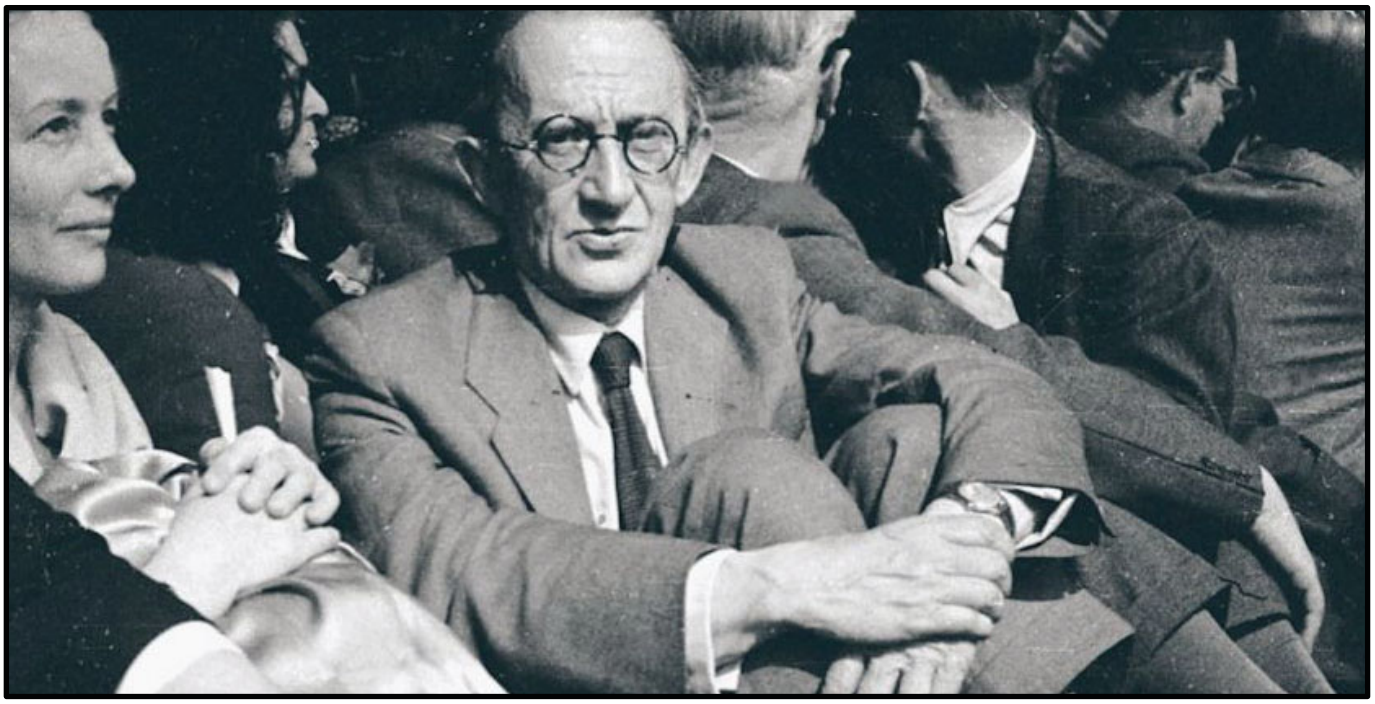
In 2014, Lopez, a history and social theory major, began his PhD studies[3] in philosophy and set himself the research task of 'systematizing' Lukács' 1920s political philosophy. He was encouraged to pursue a more serious study of theory, and Lukács specifically[4], by SAlt founding member Sandra Bloodworth. The end result of this study was his major work titled 'Lukács: Praxis and the Absolute', a colossal book of over 600 pages, published by *Historical Materialism* in 2019. In the final product, Lopez's goal mutated from the original 'systemization' into what he labels as delivering "a *speculative* reading of Lukács". In short, he describes this task as making conscious the scientific method (of knowledge claims) deployed by Lukács in his most radical works of the 1920's, and rendering the consciousness of that method as an essential aspect of comprehending the *whole* of this work. With this, he reevaluates the content of these works from the

[1] A potentially dubious characterization, however, used here in reference to SAlt's (re-)engagement with Lenin contra various forms of late 20th century 'Leninism'. See e.g. S. Bloodworth *'Lenin vs. "Leninism"'*, Marxist Left Review, January 2013 (https://marxistleftreview.org/articles/lenin-vs-leninism/).

[2] See e.g. John Rees, *The Algebra of Revolution: the Dialectic and the Classical Marxist Tradition* (Routledge, 1998)

[3] Lopez undertook his PhD at La Trobe university, where, coincidentally, several "second generation" Budapest-school Marxists held positions - that is, students of the students of the elder-Lukács - like Agnes Heller who had taken up exile in Australia following expulsion from the USSR, and they continued a tradition of critical engagement with Marxism centering around the journal *thesis eleven*. Lopez encountered this clique, however their influence on his research was limited.

[4] See D. A. Lopez ""



Gyorgy Lukacs suts in a crowd| PHOTO: Jacobin Magazine

standpoint of the unity of this method and the content.

In parallel with the course of writing this book, tensions regarding his philosophical break compounded within SAlt, deepening further when he was offered to take up the role of the Australian editor-at-large at Jacobin magazine in 2019, which was experiencing a rapid growth in its international readership in the post-2015 millennial neo-social democratic moment. This culminated in a fierce conflict over Lopez's offering of soft, critical support for the candidacy of Bernie Sanders in the US, for which he was internally castigated within SAlt as a 'mealy-mouthed reformist twaddler' and an 'intellectual backslider'. Although Lopez admittedly 'picked this fight' as an opportunity to make a stand on the question of the possibility of socialist praxis in the present, as a "strategy for smashing the Democratic Party and building a new Socialist Party in the USA", he never expected it would reach such heights of polemic. Indeed, this conflict was further fueled by what he describes as a paranoia within SAlt that the contemporaneous collapse of the ISO could be, in part, blamed on the rise of Jacobin and the DSA. After a long internal expulsion debate, he eventually resigned under duress in 2019, after 17 years of service to the organisation.

In his resignation letter, Lopez writes about the harsh reception of his "ambivalence about the necessity of insurrection and [his] theoretical skepticism towards the contemporary applicability of a model of socialist revolution derived from the October Revolution of 1917". He characterizes the consequences of this response, by saying:

> *[The] overarching message is that skepticism is dangerous, demoralizing and a threat to socialist organizing. This argument is profoundly authoritarian. It also gives license to any number of spurious, counterfactual and self-contradictory assertions. [...] The only alternative to skepticism is dogmatism. [RL]*

He quotes, in his letter, a succinct formulation by SAlt founding member Mick Armstrong, who writes "You can't develop a positive perspective or strategy on the basis of skepticism and agnosticism. It is paralyzing.". Despite the Socialist Alternative's strict adherence to certain ideological positions, Lopez remains the *only* member in the 30 year history of the organisation to have ever been expelled for *political* disagreements.

While insisting that his book on Lukács, which came out after his expulsion, should not be read as a 'break up note to Socialist Alternative', Lopez expounds the liberatory effect that Lukács had on his political thinking:

Engraving of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel| PHOTO: Universal History Archive/Getty

> *It enabled me to see the structure of revolutionary socialist thinking that existed within SAlt, and I found it to be a nostalgic nihilism that believes that you can systemise the revolution of 1917. [...] I could see that the highest version of SAlt's politics, philosophically, is Lukács. That is, the Socialist Alternative's nostalgic mythology of the October Revolution is epitomized in Lukács's philosophy of praxis. [...] Thus, I didn't regard the leadership of Socialist Alternative as an intellectual authority anymore. [PC]*

In jest, this author remarks to him that he was perhaps 'kicked out for taking Lukács *too* seriously', to which he laughingly replies is 'not wrong', however, as previously mentioned, it is no heresy to read Lukács in SAlt. Rather, the confidence to pick that fight over Sanders was in part due to his intellectual work.

Lopez describes that intellectual work, in brief terms, as an elucidation of Lukács' Philosophy of Praxis, his *method*, as structured in three stages:

1. Sociological-historical critique.
2. Philosophical critique (qua German Idealism).
3. Politics as the actualisation of praxis.

However, after grasping the aforementioned limits of Lukács's method, he delivers a twist:

> *Instead of seeing politics as the highest goal or highest order of thought, as it is for Lukács, I came to regard philosophy as the highest order of thought. In the book, I advocate the reversal of the last two stages of Lukács' method; political theory becomes the prolegomena to philosophy and philosophy becomes a vantage point from which to regard politics rationally. Not in the sense that philosophy can dictate to politics, but rather that philosophy gives you a freedom within politics to think about the conceptual structure of politics. [PC]*

Concurrently with his PhD, Lopez had undertaken a serious study of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This was profoundly influential on him and the writing of his book. Indeed, he models his twist of Lukács on a similar logical move of Hegel's, specifically referencing that in the final chapter on Spirit Hegel 'leaves behind political thinking as such, and turns instead to the self-knowledge of spirit, namely, art, religion and philosophy'. Lopez also considers this aspect of his work as taking up Gillian Rose's task of a 'reformation' of Marxism, as outlined in the

final chapter of her 1991 work "Hegel Contra Sociology", that is, to undertake a so-called 'Philosophical critique of Marxism' via Hegel's speculative philosophy. To be clear on the stakes here, by 'contra sociology', Rose means, in large part, 'contra the *Sociological* Marxism of Lukács'. But what is it about Lukács' Marxism that is 'sociological' for Rose? She sees him as having inherited the 'neo-Kantianism' of his teachers of Sociology - particularly Durkheim, Weber and Simmel[1]. In this way, Lukács' thinking, at certain moments, is said to fall below the threshold of a fully-Hegelian philosophical self-knowing. Very briefly, Lopez describes this 'speculative' mode of thinking by saying that:

> *Dialectical thinking proceeds through opposites and does so endlessly - one can always find the opposite of anything - whereas Speculative thinking understands that that is the structure of thought in principal and in general and tries to create a logic and a methodology that can move through those opposites within the coherence of a whole. [PC]*

Regarding his book as a contribution to Rose's project of Reformation, Lopez writes:

> *This book argues that the radicalism of Lukács' Philosophy of Praxis may only be sustained by philosophy itself. So, instead of a rejection of Lukács' Philosophy of Praxis, this study will ultimately argue that Lukács's philosophical framework from the 1920's may form a pathway from Marxism back to Hegelian philosophy proper. [LPA]*

Thus Lopez's theoretical break culminates in a *return* to philosophy - a return to the critical self-consciousness of the bourgeois revolutionary epoch of 1789-1830. However, he maintains that disagreements over the role of Philosophy within Marxism should not form the basis for sectarianism. In his resignation letter, he writes:

> *Philosophically, I am not a Marxist but a Hegelian. I take this position because I don't believe that Marx possesses a coherent philosophy, even though I regard his social theory, theory of history, politics and political economy as indispensable. [...] Philosophical differences should not be allowed to become organisational boundaries. I also believe that Marxism is incomplete and that no current within Marxist thought has developed a satisfactory answer to the problem of socialist transformation. [...] Every tradition claiming connection with the Russian Revolution has failed. [RL]*

Lopez reflected on Lukács in his piece "The Marxist Ideology, or, History and Class Consciousness After One Hundred Years", where he summarizes his view of the present task:

> *What I propose — with and against Lukács — is not the abandonment of our tradition, but that we re-gather its ruins on a superior, more rational basis. We need a self-reflexive, critical Marxism that rejects the fetishisation of tradition and orthodoxy as ideological and mythological. Only a self-critical Marxism can honestly confront our failures. [MI]*

He continues, arguing that:

> *[T]o build a better historical materialism, we must [...] complete Lukács's injunction in HCC, that "historical materialism both can and must be applied to itself." In short, the self-knowledge of capitalist society [i.e. Marxism] must come to know itself. That is, it must become a philosophy, in the genuinely Hegelian sense.*
>
> *[...] If we follow this Lukácsian method to its most radical conclusion, the resulting revolution in theory may deliver to the Left a political philosophy that can free our emancipatory conviction from orthodoxy, tradition and ideology. [MI]*

Shaped, as he is, by his experience in the Socialist Alternative, Lopez's viewpoint remains a unique registration of the culmination of the crisis of Marxism of the last hundred years, one which is deeply influenced by the Marxism of György Lukács ■

[1] See C. Cutrone ""

Crowds rally in Alice Springs after the death of Northern Territory Aboriginal man KumanjjayiWhite | PHOTO: ABC

Communists and ending deaths in custody

May saw the shocking murder of two Aboriginal men in the Northern Territory. This has led to a cyclical outpouring of grief from Indigenous Australians, who are systematically over-policed and over-incarcerated, leading to increased deaths in police custody. ***Sylvia Ruhl*** *writes.*

Two separate Indigenous deaths in custody took place in the Northern Territory within days of each other in late May. This has brought the yearly total of Indigenous deaths in custody up to 13 since the beginning of 2025. In total, there have been 598 deaths since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody concluded in 1991. If reforms enacting additional oversight and consulting were able to end this national disgrace, they would have at least begun to show progress long before now. The killing has not ceased, and high politics always appears confused and lacking in direction whenever news of another death in custody emerges.

This was clearly the case following the death in custody of disabled, Warlpiri man Kumanjayi White on the 27th of May. The Northern Territory government and police have both repeatedly ruled out allowing the automatic inquest into his death be handled by an interstate third-party, which is instead to automatically be entrusted to the NT police. There is, of course, no clear means by which an independent investigation can be enforced, as the federal government has not stepped in to do so. Regardless, the simple fact that there is uncertainty in whether the inquest will be directed by an independent body should highlight quite clearly the unreliability of the bourgeois class in granting redress for their own crimes. We cannot rely on a bureaucratic solution to end deaths in custody.

Worse still, the small-capitalist, right-wing of capital regularly agitates for the state to take more punitive measures in response to anti-social tendencies stemming from recurring social crises in impoverished Aboriginal communities. These crises are the result of racism, displacement, and the physical and cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples dating back to 1788. The ongoing anti-youth reaction in Australia, masked as being "tough on crime", is largely the result of this social crisis unleashed on Indigenous peoples, worsened now by the cost-of-living crisis. The Crisafulli LNP state government in Queensland was brought to power on the back of this anti-youth wave. Despite previously seeming to emphasise their focus on home invasions and shopfront vandalism, the government has indicated a willingness to re-criminalise public drunkenness and public urination. The government seems to be testing the waters by claiming that residents from across the state have asked for the laws to be reinstated, with Townsville MP Adam Baillie (LNP) claiming that decriminalisation of these acts is "significantly impacting livability in our beautiful part of the world."

Clearly, this campaign is not primarily concerned with the safety of the masses, but merely with improving the aesthetic appeal of regional commercial centres and main streets. It is disinterested in the crises of poverty and trauma that afflict Indigenous communities and the working class, beyond its most obvious symptoms that periodically erupt into the lives and profits of the regional small business-owner class. The small capitalists think these actions, including public drunkenness and urination, are done by a minority of individuals who are inherently "bad", and therefore can only be dealt with through the iron hand of the law. Removing someone and placing them in police custody is desirable as it makes the "problem" invisible, in spite of the well-known risks to life police custody entails.

Yet, the Indigenous working-class continues to feel the pain of every death. The small number of socialists in Australia that side with the rural bourgeoisie by condoning "tough-on-crime" politics should be made aware that they are entrenching a bloodied, racial divide within the working-class that makes unity impossible as long as it remains ignored (see: Eureka Initiative, Eureka Collective, others).

Socialists more broadly, however, denounce the recurring deaths in custody crisis for what it is: part of an ongoing genocide against Indigenous peoples. We recognise capitalism in Australia as being built on the genocide of Indigenous peoples, and that the present situation in Aboriginal communities of constant social crises; generational poverty, the health outcomes gap, over-policing, over-incarceration, the cycles of violence, is the logical outcome of this world-historic destruction. Whilst liberal progressives may push for the full implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the reforms proposed do not threaten to overturn the capitalist system that causes this crisis in the first place. Socialists must go beyond this, but we ourselves remain bleary as to what demands we need to put forward. Our demands need to be centred on heightening the Indigenous struggle, in delivering real sovereignty and an end to Indigenous oppression, which can only be done through redistributions enabled by the active dismantlement of capitalism and the realisation of socialism.

Socialists must demand the prosecution of killer cops, and that the entire police force be disarmed and disbanded. In recognising that the crises affecting Indigenous communities are a large part of the material basis for their over-criminalisation, we must demand a Treaty enshrining cultural, linguistic and land rights, and for reparations to be paid through increases in the living conditions and social services. Indigenous-run health clinics, schools and social centres must be expanded. We must demand Indigenous control over Indigenous affairs, and we must openly call for a policy against Australian chauvinism and patriotism. It is only through combatting this material basis that this genocide can end, and that we can collectively move forward towards a single, global brotherhood ■

What is the Communist Caucus?

As the Victorian Socialists expanded, members, friends and sympathisers of the RCO were quick to form the Communist Caucus, which found itself under immediate attack from sections of the broader VS. ***Anthony Furia*** *explains what the point of the communist caucus is to dispel rumours, slanders, and misinformation.*

In the early stages of its public formation, the Communist Caucus has suffered from a repeated (and often wilful) misinterpretation of its intentions, aims, and character. We hope to here clarify what, precisely, the caucus is, what it fights for, and why this fight is of utmost importance to the socialist movement in Australia.

The Communist Caucus is a sustained, coherent intervention into The Socialists. It is a political faction inside the organisation, agitating for a particular strategic, political direction. That strategic direction is a partyist one. For the caucus, this means advocating for The Socialists to aspire to the nascent potential within the organisation; to be the embryo of the type of party the socialist movement needs (a communist party). A unified, democratic, mass party with hegemony over the socialist movement itself, capable of mobilising and merging the communist and the workers' movement, and striving to present, in all facets of life, a systematic alternative to the capitalist state (and thereby class). This, of course, all sounds highly ambitious and far beyond the scope of an organisation such as The Socialists as it stands. It certainly is! The caucus does not propose that in adopting a strategic orientation, which emphasises the primary task as the formation of a communist party, that such a party will magically emerge.

Adopting this strategy is a fundamental step toward achieving such a party. We cannot wait for it to fall from the sky, pre-formed and ready-made, nor can we depend on spontaneous upticks in class struggle to begin the fight for such a party. We must lay the foundations and establish a plan, a cohered, central, strategy before any torrential downpour of class war, precisely because such foundations are what will allow us, allow the socialist movement, to capture these spontaneous eruptions and transform them into the long struggle for workers power. This, then, is what the caucus aims to do - it aims to transform The Socialists into an organisation that is comprehensively fighting for the unity of the socialist movement, for a systematic alternative pole of power to the capitalist state, and thus for the communist party.

The first place to look in any good-faith engagement with the nature of the caucus is, undeniably, its Points of Unity - those eight points which outline precisely what it stands for, and thereby what it stands against. Here, one can see clearly what the Communist Caucus aims to achieve in any transformation of The Socialists. We are in favour of a democratic party, a scientific party, an internationalist, programmatic, centralist, mass party. A party defined by such characteristics is well on its way to becoming the communist party. An organisation defined by a combination of such characteristics and a strategic aspiration towards them is an ambitious, pre-party formation with far more promise than any of the sclerotic sects that compose the movement today. The Communist Caucus fights for The Socialists to become such a formation; to both affirm and adjust the trajectory it already finds itself on today and establish firmly and concretely a strategy that truly embodies the immense potential of the organisation.

What the caucus is not, has never claimed to be, and does not aspire to be, is a broad tent 'opposition' to the current orientation of The Socialists; one dominated by the attitude of Socialist Alternative to the project (an attitude which, it seems, is increasingly less monolithic, and often unclear, in character). We are not attempting to embody some sort of Frankenstein's monster of sects; a cobbled-

Victorian Socialists host their annual conference | PHOTO: Red Flag

together mishmash of groups which find themselves opposed to Socialist Alternative simply because Socialist Alternative is the biggest target. The politics of the caucus are partyist, they, in the points of unity and rules, reflect a proposed strategy for The Socialists. Opposition to the executive, and to the position of Socialist Alternative towards the organisation, is contingent upon how such a position contradicts and impedes the potential of The Socialists to become something far greater than an electoral front for a sect, or a faux-Menshevik Australian 'left' electoral party.

By its detractors, the communist caucus has been labelled derogatorily as a caucus seeking a party "modelled on the politics and structure of early-twentieth-century European social democracy."[1] This, as with many political criticisms made between socialists, is a half-truth. We do indeed admire, and, in certain senses, seek to emulate the politics and structure of early-twentieth-century Social Democracy – just as Lenin did. Yet the concept of a mass party, of a totalising oppositional force that penetrates every layer of social life and unifies upon the basis of a clear, coherent strategy – a programmatic road to worker's power – is not new, nor is it unique to some obscurantist trend. It is an essential element of Marxist theory and practice, of the history of Marxism as an emancipatory struggle. What the caucus does is propose a way to get there, a centering of the organ of the class – the party – in the practice of the socialist movement and socialist politics. The Socialists can be one of the most vital conscious elements in the construction of such a party.

The Communist Caucus, then, is a caucus that struggles against any strategic orientation for The Socialists that fails to recognise this potential. We oppose perspectives that see The Socialists as purely a cynical electoral/recruitment front for more 'revolutionary' sects, and we oppose perspectives that blindingly accept the place of The Socialists in political life as akin to that of the Australian Greens, or an Australian *Die Linke*. There will, of course, be circumstances in which these differing strategic orientations align with that of the Communist Caucus. Perhaps those with a propensity to accept The Socialists as a potential Australian *Die Linke* will support proposals pertaining to the independence of The Socialists as an organisation such as branch organising, and perhaps those who see it as an electoral front will support ones that seem to increase their potential recruitment pool (such as national expansion). Yet the only caucus that can currently claim to struggle for The Socialists to embody a party that is both revolutionary and mass in politics and practice, to orient itself to the formation of such a party, is the Communist Caucus.

[1] Tavan, Luca. "Victorian Socialists Conference Resolves to Expand Party Organisation." Red Flag, June 17, 2025. https://redflag.org.au/article/victorian-socialists-conference-resolves-to-expand-party-organisation.

Inside the 2025 Victorian Socialists Conference

*Communist caucus member and RCO comrade **Alice** reports on the 2025 Victorian Socialists member's conference, and the caucus's engagement within it.*

The 2025 Victorian Socialists (VS) Members' Conference was held on the 14th and 15th of June, with a registered attendance of 430 members. This year's conference was particularly significant as it followed the decision of the VS executive to expand the party nationally.

This was also the first VS Members' Conference attended by the Communist Caucus, which was formally launched in May this year. The Communist Caucus's initial draft points of unity were published in April, and included a call for the national expansion of VS. Whilst the caucus is critical of the undemocratic, closed-door nature of the decision to expand nationally before the Members' Conference, we are eager to nurture the embryonic potential of VS, now The Socialists, to become a revolutionary mass party.

The caucus presented multiple constitutional and non-constitutional amendments, as well as independent motions across the two days of conference. Additionally, we ran a slate of candidates for all positions on the Executive Council, including officers and ordinary members. As anticipated, none of the Communist Caucus amendments or motions were passed, and none of our candidates were elected.

Nonetheless, the Communist Caucus' experience of the 2025 VS Members' Conference proved a successful opportunity for us to present our politics as a disciplined minority, and to measure their support amongst VS members.

June 14th

The first day of the conference kicked-off with an opening statement by Corey Oakley, secretary of VS. A sentiment which would be echoed by many speakers that weekend, Oakley described growing "distrust in politicians" and "disillusion with politics" amongst workers. He voiced concerns over this political instability lending itself to the emergence of the contemporary "far-right", and disavowed current electoral alternatives to the status-quo as "no better than the ALP [Labor Party] or the LNP [Liberal-National Party]". These comments were uplifted by a reflection on the successes of the Victorian Socialists in the recent federal election, and the massive influx of financial members outside of Victoria since expansion. Although The Socialists, and socialist politics more generally, remain a small minority, these successes inspire hope for the growth of a systematic alternative to capitalism: a socialist party alternative. The unasked question, it seems, is what kind of party do we need?

At the beginning of the first session, the caucus became aware that the amendments we proposed would be voted on bloc. Although each section was expressly marked as relating to separate components of the executive motion, they should have been submitted as separate motions with different movers and seconders. This posed a significant challenge to our ability to present a comprehensive case for all four of our amendments, including a complex, 5-part proposal for the convening of

a national conference and establishment of a delegate system and branch structure.

The speaking order compounded these challenges. Speakers for and against each motion were preceded by thirty minutes of general discussion. This essentially functioned as time for speakers against the caucus's motions to speak. Communist Caucus comrades were selected to speak during this time at best twice, and in some circumstances not at all. It should be noted that there was a time limit of three minutes per speaker, leaving the caucus with a maximum of six of the thirty minutes allocated to this general discussion. During formal debate, we aimed to present a disciplined argument for our proposals, in the face of myriad critiques, some of which appeared wilfully misinformed. This is not to say that all discussion was in bad faith, as parts of it prompted valuable debate on the political and strategic orientation of the VS. However, the structure of the speaking order left caucus members having to judiciously select the few words we had to present and clarify our proposals, and to not get dragged down by arguments in opposition which substituted politics for semantics.

After lunch, we reconvened to discuss VS's strategic orientation and priorities for the 2026 Victorian State election. Whilst a significant portion of discussion seemed to reflect the caucus's proposed amendments, they were nevertheless voted down. Many speakers spoke about the need to accompany electoral campaigning with non-electoral work to expand the mass base of the party, and establish VS as a force for socialist politics outside of election periods. Members spoke in favour of more work with unions, tenant groups, and the unemployed, as well as socialist intervention into political issues as they arise, such as the recent rally organised by VS Darebin in response to the rally by National Socialist Network members outside Northland Shopping Centre in Preston on June 1st.

Our amendments sought to clarify that whilst we maintain a firm support for socialist electoral strategy as a key priority of VS, this should not be the *sole* focus of the party. Explicitly including this on paper has consequences for the allocation of time and resources going forwards, and it is disheartening that despite a clear appetite for conducting both electoral and non-electoral work during the 2026 Victorian state election period, these amendments were shot down. Because the amendments were voted on in bloc, those which were explicitly related to our strategic orientation were in part overshadowed by a more controversial discussion of preference deals and the VS relationship to Socialist Alliance. Here, the Communist Caucus put forth arguments against binding VS to preference deals and deferential positioning towards Socialist Alliance. The Communist Caucus amendment was represented as a blanket ban on preference deals, which is not the case. Current circumstances leave VS with little bargaining power in preference deals, as left-to-right preferencing (the principled approach promised by VS executive members) will take place irrespective of the specifics of any preference deal. In terms of the VS relationship with Socialist Alliance, caucus amendments which aimed to orient VS towards becoming a hegemonic, mass socialist party were construed as needlessly undiplomatic and aggressive. The non-confrontational approach put forward by the executive guarantees Socialist Alliance the uncontested opportunity to run candidates in elections, and support from VS in preferences and joint-campaign work. Yet binding the hands of VS electorally and securing the future of an otherwise moribund sect is unproductive, and in of itself antithetical to the establishment of a single socialist party.

An independent motion was brought forwards for discussion on day one to support the activity of the VS Socialist Workers caucus, whose primary focus is workplace and union organising. The motion was carried without dissent.

June 15th

Day two of the conference began with voting on a series of constitutional amendments relating to organisational structures, as well as candidate pre-selection. The debate centred around the executive's proposal for a local coordinator system, and the branch structure

Members vote at the 2025 Victorian Socialists Conference | PHOTO: Red Flag

approach presented by the Communist Caucus. Speakers against caucus amendments voiced lexical concerns surrounding the terms "immediately" (in reference to tasking the executive with the organisation of inaugural branch meetings), and the specific number of thirty members as the minimum amount required to establish a branch. Debate around the term "immediately" was also a sticking point of our amendment for the convening of a national conference and establishment of a delegate system.

The caucus made efforts to clarify that we were amenable to changing the semantic and logistic content of our proposal, so long as the underlying political and structural content was not compromised. Nevertheless, the amendments for a branch structure system failed, leaving VS with a local coordinator system which emboldens members of the executive to override democratic decisions on the pre-selection of candidates by members of local districts. One speaker in favour of this motion appealed to a "right to veto in case of emergency". It is concerning to think that in the situation where a candidate who has been pre-selected by members of their district is performing in an unsatisfactory manner, they are not responsible to, and recallable by, the workers they are said to represent, but by members of the executive.

The treasurer then provided a report which was carried without dissent, and a "No Bosses" motion which precludes anyone who "extracts a profit from the exploitation of workers" or "[is] tasked with the hiring and firing of workers" from pre-selection as a candidate was passed. A motion on the establishment of a Policy Committee (whose members are appointed by the executive) was also passed, which although significantly lacking in transparency and democratic decision-making, was an improvement on the policy strategy of VS, as it allows members to submit draft policy proposals and inquiries for consideration.

Having learned from experience the day prior, we submitted a procedural motion to request our independent motions, which had also been submitted as one document, be voted on separately for day two of the conference. This motion failed, although some non-Communist Caucus members were sympathetic to our assertion that the motion contained a highly varied collection of proposals which would have differing levels of support from conference attendees. The argument made by Oakley was that the Communist Caucus independent motions collectively represented a complete overturning of the strategic and political orientation of VS as it stood, consequently, should be voted on as one motion.

Arguments against the caucus motion largely revolved around the idea that socialists should "meet the workers where they're at", and a

refusal to engage in political debate around the implementation of a minimum-maximum program, beyond dismissing it as irrelevant or too confusing and inaccessible for the average worker. Speakers against did not address the actual political content of the draft program, nor the aspiration to transform VS into a hegemonic, revolutionary mass party.

A motion titled "To Affirm Victorian Socialist's position against Imperialism and Militarism" was preceded by a procedural motion for an additional fifteen minutes of general discussion prior to formal debate. It was surprising that such a procedural motion could be put forward, considering the page outlining conference procedures on the VS website did not outline the 30 minutes of general discussion prior to formal debate, let alone the capacity to request additional time for general discussion. Caucus comrades refrained from participating in the discussion on this motion as we anticipated it as being largely unproductive. Interestingly, the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) was specifically named at one point, denounced as Stalinists whose politics are incompatible with Victorian Socialists! A later statement made by Mick Armstrong essentially conveyed an Ecumenical socialist position; arguing that we may have disagreement on questions including, for example, whether China is a socialist state, but that a position can be democratically decided, and as long as democratic decision is accepted, difference in opinion should not preclude VS membership.

The final session began with a communications report which detailed the successes of the 2025 Australian federal election, highlighting Pingers4Parliament as a key aspect of the media strategy. The desire to reach young people through social media and short-form content was emphasised, and receiving attention from the mainstream media was discussed as a challenge which could be overcome by continuing to put forward attention-grabbing and entertaining young people like van den Lamb. This report presented the success of VS as bolstered by a media and communications strategy that is "readily comprehensible, but also relatable and appealing." Parts of the report were squarely aimed at distinguishing the approach of the executive from that of the CC, in preparation for the elections later that day. It was argued that communists are not "operating on a modern basis" and that an explicitly communist program would be dismissed by workers. The caucus is under no illusion that we are in a period of revolutionary activity, or that class consciousness is not at an historic low, but we disdain to conceal our views and aims.

Caucus members running for office positions made clear that we were contesting the elections on a political basis. Candidates for Ordinary Member of the Executive Council did not have an opportunity to speak. As anticipated, no members of the Communist Caucus were elected. Olga K., our number one candidate for the Executive Council, received 5.7% of the vote; just over half of the 10% needed to be elected. A slate was put together by Socialist Alternative, containing nine Socialist Alternative members, a member of the Socialist Workers' Caucus, and independents Daniel Lopez and Jordan Van Den Lamb. This slate was followed exactly by approximately 60% of voters.

The 2025 VS Members' Conference was an exciting chance for the Communist Caucus to test our politics and make the case for an unapologetically communist orientation. We are keen to continue working as a disciplined and principled minority, and if you're involved in The Socialists, you'll be seeing us at conference next year, and involved in local VS organising in the meantime! ■

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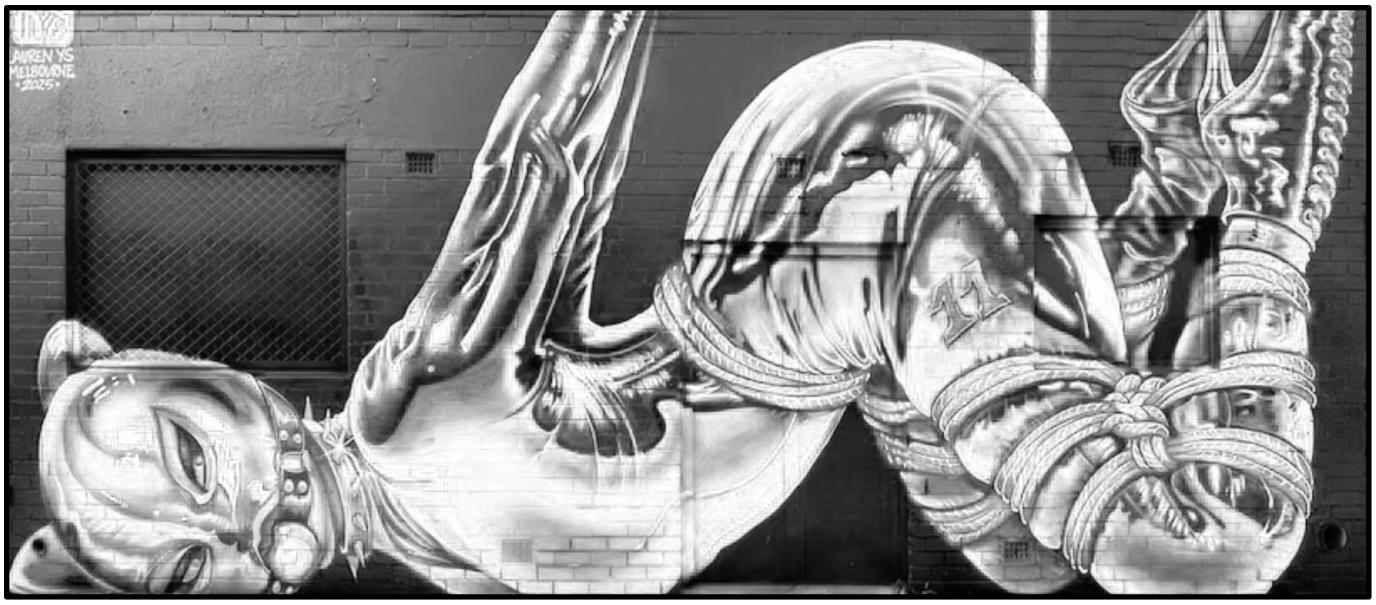

The mural on a building in Fitzroy, by LA Based Artist Lauren YS | PHOTO: ABC

Red Flag: Women's worst friend

*A raunchy mural in a Melbourne suburb has caused another moral panic about public sexuality. **Maya Kaufmann** writes on Socialist Alternative's pivot back toward anti-"raunch culture" busybodying, and how it reflects a conservative turn in International Socialism/Cliffite Socialism.*

Thousands of emails submitted to the local council. A somewhat tepid defence by an LA-based mural artist with an odd name. A controversial piece of street art. A flurry of complaints organised by a coalition of churches and radical feminists. In short, it has all the trappings of the kind of moral panic that gets suburban retirees and letter-to-the-editor writers furious. For those of us in the socialist left, the case is of minimal interest, distinguished only by the participation of the post-Cliffite revolutionaries at the *Red Flag* newspaper.

The article by Sarah Garnham concerning the now defaced mural - which depicted a woman in latex, bound and gagged - and the controversial queer artist "Lauren YS" is one of two articles in the paper (the other, by Anneke Demanuele denounces the "sexual depravity" of the recent Sabrina Carpenter album), published by Socialist Alternative, signaling a return to the "anti-raunch culture" campaigning of the 2000s. For those comrades not aware of the history of this particular Cliffite bugbear, it may appear odd that a socialist newspaper would cover the harrumphing of neighbourhood busybodies in the inner Melbourne suburbs. For those of us who are somewhat aware of their history in this field, it is less of a shock.

The two articles have been released within a month of each other after a long period of non-coverage of this topic. In her article, Garnham attacks the mural as promoting:

> *The dehumanisation of women as legitimate sexual activity, in the context of a society in which women are oppressed and already subject to unacceptably high levels of violence, often deadly violence. How can we wring our hands at every news report of another woman killed by a man at the same time as every conceivable available space is saturated with images that erotise such violence to make money and, even worse, elevate it to art?*

Of course, opposition to violence against women is a cause that all socialists would agree on. We might however disagree on the effectiveness of anti-mural campaigns in such a struggle. Accusations of being pulled into a conservative moral panic are not necessarily helped by uncritically citing Collective Shout as a feminist, "anti-violence" group.

Garnham might think twice about jumping into the trenches if she looked into Collective Shout. Despite being a nominally feminist organisation, the group's partners include religious organisations led by Pentecostal pastors and Christian charity & youth organisations. Their representatives have spoken at various feminist events in Britain that denounce the "transsexual menace" to women and girls. On Collective Shout's social media, they follow such luminaries as the Deep Green Resistance, a group of radical environmentalists who rub shoulders with neo-Nazis and anti-Semites. The organisation as a whole is connected to Spinifex Press, an eco-feminist outfit who publish known anti-semite Jennifer Bilek, Sheila Jeffries, and countless books on the dangers of "gender ideology". Several of Collective Shout's leading members have had their works published by this purveyor of gutter trash.

I am not accusing Garnham of herself being an anti-semitic, anti-gay purveyor of reactionary moralism masked as feminism. In fact, I am sure she would fiercely rebut such ideas if they were presented to her. However, the inner logic of her argument is the same one that undergirds the conservative moral panic: controversial cultural works are normalising deviant and dangerous sexual behaviours.

It would not be the first time that Cliffism has dabbled in the world of conservative morality drama. In the 2000s, when the UK Socialist Workers Party (SWP) had been playing a leading role in the Socialist Alliance left-reformist electoral coalition, they jumped ship to opportunistically shack up with George Galloway and the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB; a representative body of the Muslim middle class) in the RESPECT coalition. As the Weekly Worker documented at the time, this alliance forced the Socialist Workers Party to weaken their commitment to women's liberation, with abortion rights being dropped from the platform to appease their newfound coalition partners. This political turn was smoothed over by the embrace of the works of Ariel Levy, a feminist author who was leading a campaign against "raunch culture" following the publication of her book *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, by the SWP. Levy argued that younger generations of women were sacrificing the victories of their sisters on the altar of male affection by dressing in skimpy clothes, watching pornography, and attending pole dancing classes. This book was all the rage in Cliffite circles at the time: with a dedicated panel at the UK Marxism Conference and copies sold in every SWP bookshop. A struggle against "raunch culture" allowed the moralists at the SWP to pose as both feminists and as moral guardians - and to make common cause with their newfound friends in the MAB, who have their own reasons to feel uncomfortable with women showing a little too much skin.

Notably, you can still find *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, a book which repeatedly labels teenage girls "bimbos" and "sluts", criticises them for exposing their stomachs, and otherwise degrades them, listed on Red Flag books for $10 (very reasonably priced!). Perhaps we can expect a new edition in which we find the music of Sabrina Carpenter thrown on the pyre. We can only hope.

Not everyone bought what Levy was selling. Luminaries of the women's liberation movement such as Lynne Segal (author of the excellent *Straight Sex*) attacked the book quite strongly in *The Guardian*, arguing that it fundamentally misunderstood the problem of sexuality. Our own comrades, in our own times, have made a similar error to Levy. Despite attacking bondage and collars, our friends at Socialist Alternative have no real account of why women might actually want to participate in this kind of degrading sexual activity. Any real theory would require them to dip into the murky waters of the relationship between sexuality and ideology, and the very complex world of human sexual activity itself. Regardless of how much one may rail against "objectification", the reality is that sexuality is a complex interplay of subject and object. As Seagal notes:

Let me share a little secret with you, something that hampers any attempt to rectify sexual behaviour: sex is all about wanting to be objectified, wanting to be the object of another's desire, another's gaze (even if, like a traditional straight man, we pretend that this is not the case). However, it is about wanting to gain this attention in ways that are reasonably safe from risk, harm or hurt - except, perhaps, for when these are the very things that turn us on.

An inability to grapple with the complexity of the sexual dynamic drives the exact reduction we see in feminist-cum-conservative groups like Collective Shout. By locating the oppression of women in the sexual act, and in particular sexual acts at that, opposition to the sexual oppression of women becomes opposition to sex-in-itself. This places feminism in a political bloc with the conservatives who also oppose the dangers of deviant sexuality. Notably, while Collective Shout and Red Flag protest depictions of women as sex slaves and prostitutes, they do not object to the constant presence of advertisements and media that depict women as blushing brides and homemakers. Surely the former is a more honest depiction of the latter! For women across the world it is marriage, not dog collars, that ties them to domestic slavery.

Whether one likes or dislikes bondage, latex, or Sabrina Carpenter, we have to contend with the fact that women are active participants in these sexual scenes. In fact, they are in some cases the biggest consumers of this material. Not only that, but these activities are not wholly done for the enjoyment of men, as many lesbians will inform you. These women are not simply brainwashed by patriarchy (despite what Socialist Alternative's very reductive account of ideology would have you believe!). Of course, mini skirts and Sabrina Carpenter albums are not a road to liberation either - but neither is covering up! Women cannot be simply chastised into liberating themselves. Our moral guardians at Red Flag might do well to remember that.

Graphic from Collective Shout highlighting campaigns they have initiated | PHOTO: Collective Shout

The reality is that this kind of hack moral hectoring is very easy. Socialist Alternative has inherited Cliffism's allergy to "programmatism" - that is, they are allergic to the hard work of elaborating a socialist program and popularising it. Instead they opt to jump from issue to issue, promoting the "socialist view", which largely consists of reformist demands in radical language. The real task of women's liberation is primarily concerned with the question of the sexual division of labour - it's about housework, childcare, and doing the dishes. The liberation of women will require millions of working women to become politically organised and conscious of their historical struggle against oppression. Opposing "raunch culture" allows the Cliffites to whip up some quick outrage without having to stand on a thorny programmatic platform and actually do the work of articulating anything that looks like **Marxism**. Notably, in their recent morality play, Garnham and Demanuele don't actually propose any solution to the issue they highlight. Should Carpenter's album be banned? Should we regulate the sex shops and ban latex? If eroticising sexual violence is morally objectionable, perhaps the works of de Sade, Orwell, and Bataille should be banned as well! It's unclear, because actually proposing to do anything might force our erstwhile comrades to say something of interest ■

BROUGHT TO YOU BY TALKING REDS...

WHAT SORT OF PARTY DO WE NEED?

TALK AND DISCUSSION

The Clyde, Carlton
Melbourne
Friday, 6pm
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Broad or mass? what kind of party do we need?

Broad parties are common across the global left, but their success has been limited. Why? ***Edith Fischer*** *writes that we need a revolutionary mass party, not a broad party, to advance the Communist cause.*

What sort of party do we need? In the socialist left, outside of those who tail Laborism or support entry into the Green movement, we largely hear two answers: the Broad Party and the Party of a New Type. While my comrades at the Partisan have engaged in a sustained critique of the Party of a New Type, I believe it is time to level the guns at the Broad Party and its advocates. This is not for no reason: it is the framework of the Broad Party that animates the largest socialist project in the country: the Socialist Party, with its various state-wide sections.

In Australia, the primary thinkers cited by advocates of the Broad Party are Murray Smith of the *Scottish Socialist Party* (SSP), and the radical-democratic populists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. The former has more sway in the sectarian left - Smith is often discussed in the *Socialist Alliance* and has been republished in *LINKS*, Alliance's somewhat moribund theoretical review. Laclau and Mouffe are arguably more influential, having made a substantial impact on figures in the left of the Greens, such as Max Chandler-Mather and Liam Flenady.

Laclau and Mouffe have their own pedigree, being the founders of the post-structuralist Essex School of discourse analysis, and being extremely influential in their propagation of "post-Marxism" - a radical left populism that rejects the centrality of the proletariat. While they have left far more of a mark than Smith, their followers are not as prominent in the Socialist Party in Australia, and as such a more extensive treatment, and a general balance sheet of left populism as a political project, will be continued in a future article.

Smith has a somewhat different background. A lifelong Marxist and member of the *Committee for a Workers International* (a splinter of the Grantite *Militant Tendency*) and an activist in the broad left SSP, he became an advocate of the "broad party strategy" and entered into a series of polemics with John Rees, a prominent intellectual of the Cliffite *Socialist Workers Party* (SWP). In the Australian context, he also entered a debate with Mick Armstrong and John Percy, who were at the time members of *Socialist Alternative* (Percy has since passed away). This debate took place in the context of unity talks between *Socialist Alliance* and *Socialist Alternative* in 2013, talks which while producing some optimism in the rank and file, were quickly scuppered by the mutual sectarianism of the leaderships.

In his polemic with Armstrong and Percy, Smith provides us with a clear outline of the Broad Party concept. With the collapse of the social democratic workers movement into neoliberal capitalism, a position has opened up to the left of social democracy in which a new left movement could forge a space electorally. This party of the left would draw together disparate political forces into a mass movement against neoliberal capitalism and the political right. In short, Smith argues for a broad left party that organises all those who have not been captured by neoliberalism - regardless of their orientation towards classical questions of reform and revolution. Model examples can be found across Europe: the *Scottish Socialist Party*, the *Socialist Alliance*, *Die Linke*, *Le Parti de Gauche*, and SYRIZA.

Programmatic Problems

Smith's model of the broad party is plagued with programmatic inadequacies. From the outset, it is clear that this party does not make a programmatic distinction between reformist and revolutionary socialism. That is, it should postulate a socialist platform without *explicitly indicating a revolutionary orientation*. A good example of such a platform can be found in the policy platform of the *Socialist Party* in Victoria. This document consists of a laundry list of economic and social demands which, taken together, would be simply intolerable for capital. However, at no point is the key question ever addressed: how will the working class take power? When pressed, most members of the *Socialist Party* will say that constitutional limits on nationalisation of industry (to give one example!) can be swept aside, or that they simply are not relevant at this stage. In practice, this amounts to a fudge - and an unwillingness to confront the question.

Mick Armstrong's critique of Smith's broad party formulation is telling. Armstrong puts forward a solid account of the sectarian "Party of a New Type" formulation that emerged from the *Communist International* and was enforced during Bolshevization. This framework argues for an ideologically coherent and relatively politically homogenous revolutionary cadre organisation that engages in a form of bureaucratic centralism - disagreement is kept strictly internally and factionalism is either explicitly banned or discouraged. In a rather sharp critique, Armstrong accuses Smith of muddling the difference between left reformism and revolutionary Marxism, and in turn accuses Smith of liquidating revolutionary politics into a broad front that is overwhelmingly oriented towards "peaceful revolution" and a new form of democracy, absent of revolutionary or proletarian content.

Armstrong's critiques of Smith hit the mark pretty squarely. The Broad Party is essentially a left reformist formulation, which confuses the vital programmatic questions facing the working class. However, Armstrong's counter-position is equally untenable. The sectarian Party of a New Type, Smith rightly points out, is self-isolating and cliquish, incapable of achieving mass support because it is allergic to political disagreement. In the years since his polemic was published, Armstrong seems to have come to agree with Smith. After placing their feet firmly in opposition to Broad Party formations, *Socialist Alternative* has since leaped into a liquidationist turn - becoming the primary political force in the broad *Victorian Socialists*, and fighting vehemently to maintain its broad character against those who would seek to impose some kind of programmatic framework onto the organisation. *Marxist Left Review* should probably print a retraction - or at least a sequel.

Armstrong is correct that drawing a line between reformism and revolutionary Marxism is vital **even outside of the revolutionary period**. But the question that he fails to answer is how. If you ask Socialist Alternative, it is about militating for revolution rhetorically, and training revolutionary cadres for the future battle. Of course, both of these points are important, but they obscure the real question. It is entirely possible to be revolutionary in word and reformist in practice. The practical line of demarcation between reformism and revolution that is fudged by both Smith and Armstrong is consistent oppositionalism and disloyalty to the state!

Medway Baker makes the case well in her article in Cosmonaut,

> *Their* [the Bolsheviks and the Left SRs - EF] *unifying point is, in short, constitutional disloyalty. The moderate socialists' insistence on compromise with the bourgeoisie represents a commitment, on the other hand, to playing by the rules of the bourgeois constitutional order. It is not sufficient to declare oneself a partisan of the revolution (as did many of the moderate socialists); what is necessary, for the most basic kind of unity, is a refusal to abide by the constitution.*

The struggle between reformists and revolutionaries is an expression of a programmatic struggle - a struggle between

those who are loyal to the existing constitutional order, who side with their own ruling class, and who seek a common block with the bourgeoisie (coalitionists), and those who are wholly opposed to the current order, to any coalition with the bourgeoisie and their parties, and to their own ruling class - at home and abroad (oppositionalists).

There are plenty of revolutionary sophists who fail to make this hurdle. The Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL), who have consistently defended imperialist policy abroad and equivocated between imperialism and its victims, has planted its boots firmly on the side of state loyalism. So too do those in the Democratic Socialists of America, and the Communist Party of the United States of America, who speak of revolution out of one side of their mouth, while calling for a common front with the "progressive bourgeois" with the other. This kind of state loyalism is the actual line of division between reformists and revolutionaries, between coalitionists and oppositionalists.

Smith's Broad Party formulation fails precisely because it fails to make this distinction. *Die Linke*, *SYRIZA*, *Podemos* - all the darlings of the Broad Left have one by one jumped into coalition governments with bourgeois and social imperialist parties. The results have been disastrous, and the recent history of left populist opportunism has been a trail of failures and political defeats that have stunted the development of the revolutionary working class movement in Europe.

Not Broad, Mass

> *The building of an alternative leadership of the working class; i.e., of new revolutionary mass parties, remains the central task of our epoch. The problem is not that of repeating over and over again this elementary truth, but of explaining concretely how it is to be done.* ***In fact, the building of revolutionary mass parties combines three concrete processes: the process of defending and constantly enriching the Marxist revolutionary program; of building, educating and hardening a revolutionary Marxist cadre; and of winning mass influence for this cadre.*** *These three processes are dialectically intertwined. Divorced from the mass movement, a revolutionary cadre becomes a sect. Divorced from the program of revolutionary Marxism, cadres immersed in the mass movement eventually succumb to opportunism. And divorced from practical testing by cadres struggling as part and parcel of the masses, the revolutionary program itself becomes ossified and degenerates into a sterile incantation of dogmatic formulas.* - from *Dynamics of World Revolution Today*, adopted by the Seventh World Congress of Fourth International (Emphasis mine - EF)

The alternative to the Broad Party formulation is a Mass Party. The Mass Party differs from the Broad Party in that it has a clear basis for unity - a political program that explicitly places it in opposition to the bourgeois political order. In turn, the mass party is oppositional - it seeks to place itself in opposition to the entire capitalist order, and opposes any coalition agreement with the capitalist parties. The Mass Party then seeks to win the working class to a coherent, revolutionary program, not by hiding its views behind temporarily popular slogans, but by consistent agitation, propaganda, and mass action tactics.

As Baker succinctly puts it:

> *Programmatic unity is not an appeal for unity around theoretical tenets, nor is it an appeal for a broad left party. Both of these extremes have proven to be dead ends and it is time that we leave them behind. Communist programmatic unity means unity around a shared strategy for taking power and initiating the socialist transition, which means a shared commitment to constitutional disloyalty and pursuing multiple tactics simultaneously, all directed towards the common aim. This*

Members of the German SPD particiapte in a miners' strike, 1905 | PHOTO: Jacobin

> *requires both intellectual and political pluralism and democratic centralism, which means allowing multiple factions to coexist within a single party, but acting only on the democratic decisions of the majority. In a healthy mass workers' party, it is improbable that any one faction could hold a majority on its own, and all factions would presumably be represented in permanent party organs in proportion to their support among the membership.*

In short, against the Broad Party, the Mass Party is unified around a coherent program for revolutionary government and workers power. Against the Party of a New Type, it is open and democratic. These two elements are dialectically intertwined. An open and democratic political life allows the party to retain its mass character, while furthering fostering unity around a common program. In term, the coherent political program provides a solid basis for common political action - and binds political minorities to a common struggle.

The form of party that we advocate can be seen in the history of revolutionary social democracy. Forged in the wake of the defeat of the Paris Commune in the 1870s, the revolutionary mass parties of the early twentieth century, both social democratic and then communist, demonstrated that unity around a coherent program of democratic and social revolution was vital to winning mass support amongst the working class. This unity - programmatic unity - was reinforced by systematic opposition, which was enforced in the early years of the movement - such as when the congress of the *Social Democratic Party of Germany* censured the party's Bavarian section for giving confidence-and-supply to a bourgeois regional government.

It was indeed on the basis of effecting a split from state loyalism that the Second International was torn apart after the treason of the social democratic party leadership during the First World War. The division between state loyalism and oppositionalism has yawned before us ever since. No attempt at fudging the differences can obscure this, nor can it mend the effect this division has had on the international working class.

In Australia, we face an unprecedented period of reconsolidation and party building. It is vital that we articulate a clear common vision of a new, mass socialist party, on that does not fudge the necessary questions, and one that takes its political task seriously: not just to raise the flag of socialism, but to prepare the working class to take political power ■

LETTERS

Get in touch! Letters should be sent to partisanmagazine@proton.me and contain the subject "Letter: [heading]".

VS Communist Caucus responds to Corey Oakley

VS COMMUNIST CAUCUS, ONLINE

Comrade Corey Oakley's comments on our amendments are much appreciated - the purpose of proposing these was to encourage debate and discussion and assess the popularity of our minority position, and we are glad they have at least partially succeeded so far. Given the fact that these comments were posted the day before the conference itself, comrades will forgive us for a shorter (initial) response than this discussion warrants.

We will be brief: Oakley is absolutely correct in stating that our motions and amendments aim to overturn the entire strategic orientation of VS. They do so in proposing an alternative one, aimed squarely at utilising and nourishing the embryonic potential of The Socialists as a mass organisation, a revolutionary mass party. Stepping through Oakley's opposition to our motions, we see clearly what is at stake here is what VS is to become, what it should seek to be.

Amendments to "Expanding Victorian Socialists Australia-wide"

On our very first amendment, Oakley opposes the change from 'national' fight to 'international' (having removed this sentence from the proposed motion itself) on the basis that it "has nothing to do with the reason we are expanding Vic Socialists across Australia." This is disputable. What is the reason we are expanding VS across Australia? The Communist Caucus believes, in the broadest sense, it is to advance socialist struggle - a struggle Oakley recognises as a necessarily international one. Surely, then, acknowledgement of this fact is important in combating any conception which would see socialism as something achievable within a single country, and affirms the necessary commitment of communists to international struggle.

Oakley then moves to defend the decision of the executive to initiate nation-wide expansion prior to conference as being within the executive's mandate, a critique of which is the second part of our first amendment. Oakley points out that there is no evidence provided in the motion itself for this assertion - that is correct, we imagined that we would detail our case at the conference itself. Yet to outline the argument, there is no clear reason for the executive to have *not* waited until the conference. The responsibility of the executive, as broadly defined as it is (another problem the Communist Caucus has with the VS constitution), is to be the governing body of the party subordinated to the Party Conference and the constitution. It determines the political line, strategic orientation, and membership of the party in between conferences and in line with the constitution.

Nothing within the constitution or the motions of the last VS conference expressly outline a move towards a decision as significant for the party as national expansion. If we want a democratic mass organisation, we must ensure that significant decisions on strategy are made democratically. Oakley argues that the opportunity for this expansion was defined to a specific window of time, and points to the thousands of people who have signed up for The Socialists as evidence of this. We argue that there is no evidence to suggest that such an opportunity was in fact time-sensitive at all, nor that the thousands of applicants are due to the specific timing of the launch. It seems difficult to justify why expansion could not have waited for democratic approval by conference on this basis, particularly considering the immense amount of consultation and discussion that would be necessary to determine the specifics of such an expansion democratically.

Corey then opposes the renaming of Victorian Socialists to "Socialist Party (Victorian Branch)" on the basis of the name recognition VS currently possesses. We find this hardly convincing, considering a renaming would

reflect the significant change that a national expansion is to the very character of the organisation. Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that VS voters would find such a name change impossibly confusing or disruptive, particularly if our agitational materials remain stylised in a similar way. While state parochialism may not be an immense problem for the socialist movement now, in not moving to combat a federalist separation of state parties, we are actively sowing the seeds for it - why not change our name now, and avoid such a problem as we grow?

Oakley further moves to address our amendment on changing support for a united socialist party "in the Australian electoral sphere" with "in Australia." Oakley opposes this change under the belief that it would force the dissolution of constituent organisations and potential constituents of The Socialist Party (Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance) into such a party. While we certainly would not oppose any move from such organisations to dedicate themselves utterly to the work of building The Socialists, our formulation does not order this. The Socialists (and by extension VS) should support a united socialist party, as it should seek to become such a party. What other socialist organisations participating in VS choose to do in order to support this is demonstrably up to them. Ideally, it is true, this formulation would spell an end to each and every socialist sect, to be replaced by something greater than the sum of their parts; a mass socialist party. But we recognise this as an *aspiration* of The Socialists, something to work towards, as opposed to something that can be implemented through changes to wording.

Oakley also takes issue with our replacement of "with the aim of not contesting the same seats and supporting each other's campaigns" with "in the interests of the Socialist Movement" when it comes to Socialist Alliance. He states this means a withdrawal of support for Alliance, replaced with an attitude of "we will do whatever we want and screw you." Bar the abrasive formulation, which would be incredibly undiplomatic of us to present in a motion, this is somewhat correct. The Communist Caucus does not believe that The Socialists should strive to accommodate the existence of multiple electoral socialist parties; why not aspire for hegemony? The numbers are on our side, and if it suits the interests of the socialist movement, of socialist agitation, to contest the same seats as Alliance, then why should we inhibit ourselves from doing so? This does not by any means *mandate* hostility towards Alliance, but our change refuses to give them the guarantee of the privilege they currently enjoy from VS support without VS membership.

Oakley then moves to our motion to rewrite point 6. We won't spend long here, as many of these critiques surround specific semantic ordering. What should be noted is:

☐ Establishing a task to expand VS nationally is not the same as the immediate formation of such a national party here in Victoria, with only Victorian members.
☐ *Immediately* convening a national conference can be reasonably interpreted as referring to once new local branches have had a chance to meet and elect delegates - the specific execution of such a motion is something we would leave to the Executive, were it to pass. We are more than happy to amend this amendment itself to remove references to 'immediately' in the first place - would this make such a motion acceptable?

Oakley also dismissively references the minimum-maximum programmatic style the CC proposes for a potential VS program - it is true that this was the style of the SPD, a genuine mass party for all its failings, and, need we remind comrades, also the program style of the Parti Ouvrier - drafted in part by Karl Marx.

Amendments to "2026 Victorian state election" motion

Oakley then goes on to assert that our proposed change from "Victorian Socialists considers the 2026 Victorian state election campaign to be our key strategic priority" to "key electoral priority" is "a rejection of the importance [of] electoral campaigning." Far from it - the CC is firmly in favour of the critical importance of a staunch communist electoral strategy. Yet we believe the importance of going beyond this into the future; of striving to expand the party's base. The goal of the conference should be to clarify such a strategic orientation in broad strokes, but in full ones - hence our addition of an aim

to expand the base of the party in certain ways.

As it pertains to our change from "negotiations about preferences with other parties" to "by our engagement with working class organisations," Oakley asserts that VS will be unable to win without a preference strategy. The position outlined here is intended to rule out not 'preference strategies' generally but to rule out deals with bourgeois parties. VS should not rely upon particular ways of preferencing in order to win seats, it should rely upon its base in the class, and thereby working class organisations. We have seen precisely how well an electoral strategy dependent upon particular ways of preferencing from bourgeois parties turns out for minor parties; the recent electoral result of the Greens being a perfect example.

We will not address the critique against our proposed position towards Socialist Alliance here - we have done so above.

Amendments to "Constitutional changes to expand democratic structures in Vic Socialists"

Here, Oakley accuses the communist caucus motions of being 'schematic formulas' which do not reflect conditions on the ground for VS. It is wholly undeniable that communist caucus members have less knowledge on the current internal operations of VS when compared to those on or close to the executive - it would be a serious concern if this were otherwise! But we reject the accusation of schematism here. We believe the local coordinator system is profoundly undemocratic in function, and does not facilitate the growth of both democracy in local sections and the centralisation of The Socialists nationally.

We are more than happy for the suggested number of comrades needed to form a branch to be lowered through an amendment to our constitutional motions, and have intentionally left the pre-selection process unclarified in terms of what electoral boundaries branches are formed on to accommodate for executive interpretation and flexibility of circumstance. In the case in which specific branches do not exist for certain electorates - local, state, or federal - a meeting of members in such an electorate would participate in candidate pre-selection. This is clarified in our motion, but we are happy to discuss alternative proposals for branch representation.

The spirit of each and everyone one of our motions has been the spirit of potential. The potential for The Socialists to aspire to something greater than an electoral front, something beyond what currently exists, something that can challenge the capitalist state directly. This 'something' is a mass party. A mass party requires a program, it requires a strategy that extends beyond elections, and it requires a robust internal democratic process and culture. Our amendments and motions represent an attempt to orient VS towards these things, towards what it can become. We do not expect to win the organisation as a whole to these positions now, but we cannot struggle for them, and win comrades to them, if we do not fight under their banner. We welcome open discussion and debate, and thank comrade Oakley for his response - may there be many more between the Communist Caucus and other Victorian Socialists members into the future.

Want to change the left? Start winning

FMQ, ONLINE

An endless topic of discussion on the left going all the way back into prehistory is that the current left is bad and that people need to do something better. There are many, many solutions out there about what to do about it. This is in part a consequence of the internet giving people instant access to material that constitutes debates which have been going on for over a century and a half, as well as access to millions of strangers who have bespoke positions on countless topics. Given this it's really easy to mix and match ideas to stake out some niche position about what should be done that can be turned into a grift or Discord community.

So how might someone cut through this spectacle? Well, the simple, boring answer is that for all the intellectualism of the left, the ideas that become dominant in it about how to change the world are the ideas which drive movements which *appear to be winning*. As a

heuristic this can fail *horribly* – I recommend Russell Jacoby's essay Conformist Marxism for a quick overview of how this can go horribly wrong. But despite such dangers, the basic point is that there's an undeniable *charisma* to those who can actually make change that can cut through the spectacle of pointless debate and get to brass tacks. That's what online theory dorks who do nothing but talk *cannot have*.

Because if you want to win people to your position, you need to give people who are willing to be in the struggle for the long haul a reason that your particular venture will not just result in the same tired cul-de-sac of ineffective activism and drift into existing liberal political institutions. The best way to show you are serious is not to write the perfect programme or party constitution or come up with the most sophisticated theory of the value form but to actually demonstrate that you have ways of shifting things in a world that seems increasingly resistant to it. That's the only way to stand out in this day and age.

The point is to actually do shit, not engage in endless metacommentary on metacommentary or find ever more bespoke positions with which to signal your uniqueness.

Editor's note: Unclear if this is a critique of the RCO or any particular organisation, or The Left in general.

No, Permanent Revolution doesn't mean invasion

SIGGLE CORP, ONLINE

While there are extreme ideological differences between the swamp of anarchists and the sects of Stalinism, they remain firmly united in their undying hate for Leon Trotsky and his theories, especially that of permanent revolution, which they attack with a seething concoction of caricature, hysteria and historical falsification.

The anarchists hate Trotsky, the authoritarian imperialist who crushed Kronstadt, the Green Armies, and the Makhnovshchina; Trotsky was a traitor to the revolution.

The Stalinists hate Trotsky, the petty-bourgeois Menshevik saboteur who conspired with the fascists to undermine Stalin, an opportunist despised even by Lenin himself; Trotsky was a traitor to the revolution.

Both of these views diverge in critique, although the anarchist view is more true to reality as Trotsky was the head of the military organisation which fought against all sorts of anarchist-peasant uprisings during the civil war. However, there is no historical evidence that Trotsky worked with fascists to undermine Stalin beyond the works of Grover Fur, who famously states, "the lack of evidence is evidence." Similarly, there exists no evidence of the alleged rivalry between Trotsky and Lenin. Would you appoint your arch-nemesis as commissar of war? In contrast, Lenin repeatedly said in speeches that there was "no better Bolshevik" than Trotsky. Most of these lies come from Stalin's revision of history in order to reduce the role of Trotsky in the October Revolution and to elevate his own. But something both sides take from his school of falsification is the distorted view of permanent revolution.

Both will often say something along the lines of permanent revolution being permanent war against all capitalist nations, even to the point of land invasions and installing socialism from above. This often leads to claims of Trotsky and his ism being expansionist and imperialist. It's worth noting that Trotsky never said this. Permanent revolution was not a policy of expansionism; it is a theory of revolutionary strategy in conditions of combined and uneven development. Trotsky argued that in countries with delayed capitalist development, the national bourgeoisie was too weak and dependent on imperialism to lead a democratic revolution. This task then must fall to the burgeoning proletariat. But the working class, in leading the democratic revolution, cannot simply stop its movement, as the very act of fulfilling the task of the bourgeoisie under proletarian leadership negates their historical role. The revolution must unfold into socialism. This is not a matter of will but of necessity; the dialectic of history compels the democratic beyond its limits. The revolution becomes permanent: an ongoing process that refuses to stagnate.

In line with this theory, Trotsky correctly states that socialism could not be built in a single country. Capitalism is and always has been a global system. Any socialist revolution confined within national borders is doomed to face external imperialist threats and internal dangers of isolation, degeneration, and eventual reintegration into capitalism. While the revolution may begin in a single country, its survival depends on the extension of the struggle beyond national borders. This is no call for military conquest but for internationalism. This is in opposition to Stalin and Bukharin, who posited that socialism could actually be realised within the borders of a single nation-state regardless of the state of the socialist movement internationally. They also promoted the idea of a two-stage revolution in colonial and backward countries, where the first stage would be a democratic revolution led by the bourgeoisie, much like that of France, and the second being the socialist revolution. History has shown us this is a doomed road.

While there now exist no countries with delayed capitalist development, many communists such as in the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) or CPA-ML still posit the two-stage revolution, promoting a "government of peoples unity" made up of representatives from "progressive, democratic and patriotic forces." It should not need to be stated that this idea is ridiculous in a country like Australia where capitalism is fully developed, and that an alliance with "patriotic" forces would only lead to them betraying us and us betraying communism. It is worrying that in a world where capitalism has been in its global imperialist stage for over a century and become ever more moribund and decayed, so many communists wish to realise a nicer version of capitalism before fighting for socialism out of some vague notion of realpolitik or pragmatism.

It is worth noting the hypocrisy of many Stalinists who attack Trotsky on the basis he wished to invade other countries and impose socialism yet uphold Stalin, who did this very thing! It seems that all Stalin did was fulfill the program of the Trotskyites without the Trotskyites.

There are plenty of critiques against Trotskyism; this is not one of them. The theory of permanent revolution does not call for military conquest, but for the recognition that in the epoch of imperialism, the struggle for democracy, national liberation, and socialism are inseparable and only the working class can carry it through to the end.

'Theory dorks' not the problem

AVERY, ONLINE

Dear Partisan and FMQ, in response to a letter 'want to change the left? start winning' by FMQ, published on June 17, 2025, As the Editor noted: 'Unclear if this is a critique of the RCO or any particular organisation, or The Left in general.' Let's assume FMQ is critiquing the RCO as well as the wider left. Is action and success charismatic, and is that what it takes to win the socialist revolution? Are the RCO 'dorks'? Is the Left filled with 'dorks'?

'Nerds' or 'geeks' are common terms some activists use to dismiss the RCO and their magazines, especially in late 2023 when *Direct Action's* articles about Rising Tide and Blockade Australia spread through word of mouth in the Sydney climate left (In depth: the "People's Blockade, Direct Action, Dec. 2023 #8"). The magazine's barbs of 'adventurist' and 'seemingly defunct' to describe Blockade Australia caused umbrage like reading the latest gossip paper from Lady Whistledown in *Bridgerton*.

The RCO and *Partisan* have developed since 2023 and their critiques of the jocks (my terminology) undertaking blockades or pickets are more nuanced. In turn, the 'adventurist' leftists are getting older and more reflective, perhaps more open to critique. Most of us want to improve.

FMQ writes: 'There's an undeniable charisma to those who can actually make change that can cut through the spectacle of pointless debate and get to brass tacks. That's what online theory dorks who do nothing but talk cannot have.' My caution is that if leftists take too much action, with inflexible and conservative messaging, we become blockheaded and uncharismatic, lacking

creativity and reflection, with actions on loops like a festival circuit. Police see us coming and we are too boring for the media, who have already reported on our stories.

RCO members do engage in protests and pickets, some of a street-fighting kind: see Disrupt Land Forces ('On the ground at Disrupt Land Forces'). The Land Forces conference is scheduled to return in 2026, so perhaps that protest failed and falls in the 'ineffective activism' FMQ writes of, but I suspect it will always look like failure until we win the revolution for an Oceania socialist republic in twenty years, in which case everything will be re-evaluated as successful all along.

Write us a letter!

Writing us a letter is easy, and is a good alternative to writing a full article or essay. Letters are submitted like normal articles are, through our email.

A letter could be any kind of statement or observation, in around 500 words or less. The shorter the better. In a letter, you should give your opinion or statement on something, then finish off with your name and city (any name works - many of our writers use pseudonyms).

In particular, we encourage letters written as a reply to other articles. Of course, you are also free to write a full article in reply to another article, but sometimes it may be better to simply write a letter in. Letters may also be replies to other letters, and of course, an article can also be a reply to a letter.

You could also write one directed to the editorial team at Partisan, and if you do, we will submit a reply in the following issue. We aim to build a lively letters section as part of our overall goal to establish Partisan as a platform of open debate and polemic between and amongst the organised Left.

Letters should be sent to partisanmagazine@proton.me and contain the subject "Letter: [heading]". The content of your letter can be sent within the body of the email as opposed to a document attached to the email.

Freedom for all political prisoners!

As Russia continues to wage an imperialist war against Ukraine, Communists of all stripes have fallen under the boot of state repression (both in Russia and Ukraine). Oppose the Moscow and Kyiv gangsters, demand the release of all political prisoners!

Russian Marxist Boris Kagarlitsky was imprisoned by the Russian state under phony "anti-terrorism" charges in 2023. As of February 2024, he has been sentenced to five years in a prison colony (Meduza).

Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk was arrested by the Ukrainian Security Service on April 25th 2024. As of writing, he is being held in Nikolaev in deplorable conditions. He is being falsely charged with being a Russian state operative and a propagandist for Moscow's imperialist invasion. If found guilty, he faces a life sentence (WSWS).

Many more communists, trade unionists, and anti-war protesters are being incarcerated arbitrarily by the Russian and Ukrainian governments. We must support them all, and demand their immediate release.

In addition, the Partisan calls for the freedom of all political prisoners, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier who still languish in the prisons of the American imperialists. In Britain, the Filton 10 now face years in prison for their actions against the war profiteers at Elbit Systems. One of these comrades, Zoë Rogers, has just spent her 21st Birthday behind bars.

Freedom to the Prisoners!